

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BANGKO 23423 120639Z
ACTION DHA-05

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 VO-03 INSE-00 CA-01
CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 DODE-00 L-03 /043 W
-----050399 120642Z /14/12

R 110950Z OCT 77
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7730
INFO US MISSION GENEVA 2653
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 23423

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (MRN 23423 VICE 23424)

E.O. 11652: GDS-2
TAGS: SREF
SUBJECT: RTG POLICY ON BOAT CASE REFUGEES

REF: (A) STATE 240763
(B) BANGKOK 23075

1. ON OCTOBER 8 AMBOASSADOR DISCUSSED WITH OUT-GOING
MOI DEPUTY SECRETARY DAMRONG RTG POLICY ON BOAT CASES.
USING POINTS CONTAINED PARA 4 REF A, AMBASSADOR EX-
PRESSED OUR SERIOUS CONCERN AND HOPE THAT RTG WOULD CONTINUE
ITS HUMANITARIAN APPROACH OF ACCEPTING THE BOAT CASE
REFUGEES AS THEY ARRIVE. DAMRONG EXPRESSED HIS UNDER-
STANDING OF OUR CONCERNS BUT INDICATED THAT HE DID
NOT BELIEVE THERE COULD BE ANY CHANGE IN RTG POLICY
UNTIL OUR PROGRAM EFFECTIVELY REDUCES THE ACTUAL
NUMBER OF REFUGEES IN THAILAND.

2. IN FOLLOW-UP ON OCTOBER 11, DCM AND BARNES MET WITH
NEW MOI DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY CHAMNONG DURING MEETING
DCM EXPLAINED THAT WE ARE ACCELERATING IMPLEMENTATION
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OF OUR PAROLE PROGRAM GIVING BOAT CASES HIGHEST PRIORITY.
IN ADDITION, USG HAS UNDER SERIOUS CONSIDERATION
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LONGER RANGE POLICY TO HELP IN
HANDLING BOAT CASE PROBLEM. OUR INTEREST WILL NOT END
UPON COMPLETION OF THIS PAROLE PROGRAM. HE FURTHER
NOTED BENEFICIAL IMPACT ON RTG INTERNATIONAL IMAGE
BECAUSE OF ITS HUMANITARIAN APPROACH TO BOAT CASES.

IN LOW KEY, HE INDICATED THAT MORE RESTRICTIVE THAI POLICY ON BOAT CASES COULD ONLY HARM THIS IMAGE AND, GIVEN OUR EFFORTS AND THOSE OF OTHERS TO HELP RTG, WOULD BE VERY DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND.

3. BARNES THEN GAVE CHAMNONG DETAILED BRIEFING ON OUR PROGRAM FOR PROCESSING OF BOAT CASES, POINTING OUT THAT THERE WILL BE A SIGNIFICANT OUTFLOW OF BOAT CASE REFUGEES FROM CAMPS IN NEXT FEW MONTHS, WITH A CONSEQUENT SIGNIFICANT DECLINE IN BOAT CAMP POPULATION.

4. CHAMNONG CLEARLY APPRECIATED OUR BRIEFING. WITHOUT GIVING A FIRM COMMITMENT, HE INDICATED HE WOULD SOON BE PROCEEDING TO LAEMSING AND SONGHKLA AND WOULD DO WHAT HE COULD WITH REGARD TO THE APPROXIMATELY 200 BOAT CASE REFUGEES NOW AWAITING ENTRY INTO THE SONGHKLA CAMP. HOWEVER ON QUESTION OF BASIC RTG POLICY, LIKE DAMRONG, HE INDICATED IT WAS FIRMLY SET AND IN ABSENCE OF SIGNIFICANT DECREASE IN REFUGEE POPULATION, HE DID NOT BELIEVE THERE WAS ANY LIKELIHOOD OF EARLY CHANGE. CHAMNONG INDICATED THAT THIS POLICY HAS BEEN CONFIRMED BY NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL AND HE COULD ONLY PROMISE TO REPORT OUR APPROACH TO HIS SUPERIORS FOR NSC CONSIDERATION.

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5. WE ARE CONTINUING TO CONVEY INFORMALLY TO SENIOR RTG CIVILIAN AND MILITARY OFFICERS OUR CONCERN OVER THE THAI RESTRICTIVE POLICY ON BOAT CASE AND OTHER REFUGEES. WHITEHOUSE

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